

July 30, 2008

Gary. K. Van Meter  
Deputy Director  
Office of Regulatory Policy  
Farm Credit Administration  
1501 Farm Credit Drive  
McLean, VA 22102-5090

Dear Mr. Van Meter:

I serve on the Board for the Marion County, Georgia, Hospital Authority. I am writing to you today to ask for your continued support of the Farm Credit Administration's proposed rule to enable Farm Credit institutions to make mission-related investments in rural communities. This proposed rule will provide rural communities with more reliable access to the capital they need to support new investments in community facilities and infrastructure improvements.

In several communities in the U.S., the Farm Credit System has stepped up to the plate, working with small towns to improve health care services. In rural communities, health care services often lag behind. Only about ten percent of physicians practice in rural America, despite the fact that nearly one-fourth of our nation's population lives in these areas. Treatable diseases, such as hypertension, often become much more serious illnesses when access to quality services becomes a problem. Geographic isolation, socio-economic status, health risk behaviors and limited job opportunities contribute to health disparities in rural communities. Keeping rural hospitals open is a vital concern. In this one segment of community services, healthcare, the 50-year replacement cycle indicates a need for nearly \$5.7 billion, annually.

FCA's Pilot Program has proven that it takes adequate financial resources to provide these needs. According to a study of Critical Access Hospitals, only 39 of the nation's 1,284 CAH's had been replaced through 2006, though the need is far greater.

The FCA's proposed rule is working, and I urge you to help move it forward in the regulatory process.

Thank you for your concern for rural America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B.E. Powell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "P" at the end.

B.E. Powell  
Marion County Hospital Authority